

Reaffirming Our Mission in Challenging Times

STRATEGIC PLAN III DICKINSON COLLEGE

Dickinson College prepares aspiring students for engaged and fulfilling lives of accomplishment, leadership and service to their professions, to their communities, to the nation and to the world. Our founders intended the college to be a powerful agent of change—to advance the lot of humankind—and we expect no less today.

Dickinson College Strategic Plan, 2001

The past decade has been one of significant accomplishment for Dickinson College. Growth and innovation across almost all dimensions of the institution have allowed us to establish Dickinson as a college that offers students the right preparation for the 21st century—a pragmatic education for democracy. We have developed a truly distinctive and worthwhile educational program, expanded resources and re-positioned the college among America’s leading institutions of higher education.

A key ingredient in our success over the past decade has been the strength and viability of our two strategic plans. Benjamin Rush founded Dickinson with the ambition of creating a college “first in America” in designing an engaged, “useful” education in the liberal arts and sciences to meet the needs of a new, ever evolving democracy. Strategic Plan I adopted that ambition and gave us specific goals, objectives and benchmarks against which to gauge our performance in achieving it. Strategic Plan II retained the ambitious outlook and structure of the original document and added the important elements of accountability and sustainability as defining characteristics of our practice.

In both cases, the planning process, like all of Dickinson’s operations, embraced transparency and built consensus by soliciting input from across our community. Unlike the reality at many other institutions, our Strategic Plans became familiar documents, well-used by many members of the campus community. As such, they have served as a significant guide for our decision-making and actions, providing the foundation for an exceptional decade of progress.

It is now time for us to carry forward the planning process with Dickinson’s Strategic Plan III (SP III). We are keenly aware that the world is far different now than it was a decade ago, and we are a far different institution. We have significantly enhanced our educational program and expanded the college’s human and material resources from admissions to endowment. As a result, Dickinson has moved into a new sphere of influence among peer institutions. Yet we currently operate in a financial climate of retrenchment and limits—both globally and for higher education. Moreover, we face a public that seriously questions the value of a liberal-arts education offered at institutions such as ours. SP III represents our response to our rapidly changing environment.

At its core, SP III reaffirms our historic vision and ambition. Others may try to resolve current difficulties through significant mission redefinition and/or the addition of new schools or branches. Dickinson remains convinced of the value of its distinctive formulation of a useful residential, undergraduate

education in the liberal arts. We believe it represents our best response to current and future challenges. These challenges are, we know, very real. SP III is indeed structured around a series of major concerns that we, with many other institutions of our type, face. And it outlines the distinctive ways in which Dickinson will address these, always seeking to draw upon our historic sense of purpose and demonstrated ability through innovation to turn difficulties into opportunities.

The challenges which confront us are multifaceted. Therefore SP III touches upon virtually all aspects of the institution. It centers, however, on our students - from their recruitment through their experience on campus to their lives as alumni. We direct our energies and resources exclusively to undergraduate education. Our success ultimately rises or falls with our ability to provide our students with “an education without an expiration date,” one that gives them a firm foundation for lives of meaning and accomplishment as they engage a complex, global, and ever-evolving world.

Despite the times, we engage in the task of charting our path forward with optimism born of the momentum generated by our earlier planning efforts. Dickinson has in the past ten years established a more prominent position among America’s leading colleges, though, admittedly, one made vulnerable by our comparatively modest wealth. SP III is a blueprint for turning our decade-long momentum into long-term success.

The External Environment: Challenges & Opportunities

Dickinson’s Strategic Plan I was drafted at a time of optimism. That outlook has altered dramatically in the past decade. We live in a world of growing complexity and accelerating, often disjunctive change. Forces such as globalization, technological transformation, the movement of peoples, the interaction of cultures, and growth of human population and our ecological footprint have placed growing strain on our institutions, practices, values and the natural world. Take, by way of illustration, the characterization of current affairs offered by our faculty in international studies:

“At no point in American history has the issue of security ... been more complex. Over the past two decades, the people of the world have become more interdependent and the structure of the global system has changed. As a by-product of those developments, the nature of threats to the national interests of each country has become more multifaceted. Thus, the list ... now includes interstate conflicts, attacks on civilian populations by terrorist organizations, civil wars marked by genocide, the dangers of failed or failing states, abuses of human rights, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, global pandemics and potentially catastrophic environmental security threats. And of course issues of economic interdependence, including access to critical resources and energy. Finally, the complexity of this environment is further heightened by the global transparency that results from the Internet, worldwide media, and social networking.”

Or, for another comparably profound challenge, consider the rising issue of sustainability. We are depleting critical resources; degrading land, water and air; increasing exposures to toxins and carcinogens, and changing the earth’s atmosphere, climate, oceans and ecosystems. Such changes present interlocking scientific, economic and policy issues—all pointing to fundamental value questions about

our relationships to other human beings including future generations and to the natural world, of which we are but one part.

The global economic instability of the last two years not only offers another salient example of troubling change but also illustrates its direct impact on colleges such as Dickinson. Even in good times, Strategic Plan I noted the following economic stressors:

the declining popularity of the residential liberal arts experience; the high cost of financial aid; the emerging competition from the for-profit education industry; the potential challenge of distance learning; the rising costs of health and liability insurance; the increasing litigiousness of society and the high costs of legal services; the decreasing funding available through state, federal and private organizations to liberal-arts colleges; the high cost of equipment in the sciences and computer technology generally; and the increasingly consumer-oriented parent and student audiences that enjoy wide choices and, therefore, require high levels of service.

The current economic downturn has exacerbated all of these challenges and added others. Instability has eroded endowments and has reduced support from foundations, government, and, most importantly, private donors. More threatening for tuition-dependent institutions such as Dickinson, families have seen a downturn in their assets and ability to afford higher education—this effect multiplied by comparable erosion in their *perceived* ability to pay. When one adds a slip in the demographics of high school students in key recruitment pools for our college and its regional peers, we face a potentially severe weakening of demand for a Dickinson education.

One further troubling development is heightened competition among colleges and universities, including our peer group. Students and their families are increasingly aware of choice in the recruitment process. Higher education institutions are responding not only by deepening programs but also by providing ever more services and amenities and by offering steadily larger amounts of financial aid often based on merit rather than need. This type of competition presents an especially acute problem for Dickinson, since we have moved into a peer group of wealthier and, traditionally, more prestigious colleges.

Despite these challenges, we see real opportunities for Dickinson. For example, while traditional pools of potential students are leveling off or shrinking, new and more diverse populations are opening to us. Public questioning of a liberal-arts education is matched by a growing, countervailing endorsement of what we do. The recent effort of military service academies to redefine themselves as liberal-arts institutions is one salient example of this trend. Voices emphasizing the timeliness of our type of education have appeared in the business community and media. Though disparate in particulars, advocates for what we do share a conviction that the very nature of the changes surrounding us—the speed, complexity and high stakes of our times—makes liberal learning more not less essential. We need, they argue convincingly, leaders and a public who comfortably and regularly cross the borders of culture, language and knowledge.

Even the increasingly competitive, fluid situation within higher education can be turned to the advantage of dynamic institutions with strong value propositions and the ability to innovate. Since the articulation of Strategic Plan I, Dickinson has demonstrated that it is one such institution.

The Internal Environment: Assets & Challenges

SP III's confidence in our ability to sustain our ambition and momentum is rooted in core institutional strengths. Together these assets constitute Dickinson's "value proposition."

History: Our first asset—not only chronologically but also in vision—is our history. Dickinson was founded by Dr. Benjamin Rush, an outspoken revolutionary and signer of the Declaration of Independence, who envisioned the college as the embodiment of a distinctively American education. This new "republican education" would be "useful" in its application of liberal learning to the task generated by the American Revolution of building a just, new democracy. Dickinson College would advance an education that prepared rising generations for active and informed engagement as citizens and in their careers. The curriculum would be a purposeful mixture of traditional liberal arts with those areas of study deemed most helpful to an American citizen living and working in an increasingly complex world marked by commerce, science and global reach. For example, the modern languages of German and French were added to the curriculum as useful for Americans in diplomacy, trade and the arts. Chemistry was recommended both as the subject most potent for scientific discovery and as exemplifying a "connective" mode of thinking that saw associations among disparate elements. Outside the classroom, the college was to be located in a government seat so that students could go to municipal offices and gain an intimate understanding of "how America works."

This legacy gives Dickinson a distinctive advantage. While conferring on the college the prestige associated with hallowed historic roots, Rush's forward thinking provides the foundation for an education that connects powerfully with emerging new knowledge and contemporary concerns.

Program: Over two centuries later, Dickinson continues to answer Rush's call for education that responds to demands of the times and thereby prepares students for lives of meaning and accomplishment. This education forms the heart of our case for the value of enrollment at Dickinson. We offer students the opportunity to develop characteristics, already articulated in the *Dickinson Dimensions*, calibrated to ready them for our complex era:

- Intellectual curiosity and creativity—a strong commitment to inquiry that makes students lifelong learners and generators of new knowledge, ideas, and perspectives.
- A commitment to engagement in local, national and global communities imbued with a strong sense of personal and social responsibility.
- Cross-cultural and global perspective; willingness to appreciate and thrive in a diverse, complex world.
- Responsiveness to the challenges of rapid change and sustainability; an appreciation that change is inevitable and can be engaged productively.
- A commitment to civility and dialogue that includes both finding one's own voice and cultivating the capacity to hear others.

These characteristics are supported by what we call a "21st-century skill set." This set of abilities, rooted in proven skills commonly attributed to the liberal arts, includes competency in critical thinking and analysis; facility in communication in written and oral form; understanding of the major fields of

knowledge as organized in the humanities, social sciences and natural and physical sciences; competence in foreign language, and mastery of tools of research and information technology. In addition, Dickinson places special emphasis on areas that connect powerfully with current and future challenges.

- Global education: the college has developed a global education program that makes the campus the hub of a worldwide network of study centers and research.
- Sustainability: Dickinson has emerged as a national leader in operations and in education for a sustainable society, for living in a world in which “less is more.”
- “Connectivity:” the complexity of our era places a premium on “connecting the dots”—addressing problems by drawing on knowledge and methods from multiple fields; Dickinson has unusual strength in interdisciplinary (i.e. connective) programming.
- Active learning: Dickinson’s faculty seeks to make students active learners, for example, through laboratory research in the sciences, fieldwork in the social sciences, and creative work and performance in the arts.

In sum, Dickinson offers students skills and habits of mind that position them to navigate and succeed in their complex, rapidly changing world.

The impact of the Dickinson experience on students is magnified by the college’s exclusive focus on undergraduate education and the individual. Here a student is not a “number” among many, but rather someone with a name who possesses unique abilities and ambitions to shape into accomplishment and personal satisfaction. Dickinson faculty and staff listen carefully to the emerging questions and aspirations of each student and work closely with them to build a course of study tailored to the talents and interests of each.

Institutional Success: Dickinson’s value proposition also rests on a demonstrated record of achievement as a dynamic, progressive, and energetic institution. Consider these major achievements since the inauguration of Strategic Plan I. We repositioned the college to the extent that the *Chronicle of Higher Education* in 2006 asserted, “If Dickinson College were a corporation, Wall Street would view it as a classic turnaround.” This judgment was based on striking admissions success that nearly doubled our number of applicants, operating budgets with annual surpluses, and fund raising and investment policies that consistently place us in the top quartile nationally and have taken our endowment to unprecedented levels—this final point confirmed by the progress of our current \$150 million capital campaign. Equally impressively, we have confounded generations of doubters by transforming the college into a far more diverse place, tripling the proportion of students of color enrolled and increasing representation of international students even more. And we have raised Dickinson’s visibility among institutions of higher education and in the media, in significant part by speaking out on important issues such as college rankings, alcohol and the drinking age, for-profit education, the higher education business model, tuition discounting and three-year degrees.

As the *Chronicle* commentary demonstrates, our achievements have garnered significant outside recognition. For example, both the American Council on Education and NAFSA: Association of International Educators identified our global education program as the leader among liberal-arts colleges nationally. The Mellon Foundation has endorsed our efforts in sustainability through a \$1.4 million grant

for our Center for Sustainability Education; the work of the Center and college consistently places us among the national leaders in “green” rankings. In regard to active learning, our innovative fieldwork “Mosaic” has twice been honored by the Oral History Association as the outstanding program of its type. And on financial resources, Standard & Poor’s has improved our bond rating two steps from BBB+ to A.

People: Among the factors generating this success, the contributions of the people who comprise the Dickinson community stand out as most significant. Simply put, the college has the benefit of highly talented, dedicated faculty and staff. They are not only impressive individually but also—and very importantly—are adept at working together. Our collegial governance system effectively insures broad consultation *and* nimble response to opportunity. Such responsiveness fits our institutional strategies of focusing resources where we can excel, such as global education and sustainability. It also insures that our educational program moves with the times, as reflected in our recent work on global security. That responsiveness also characterizes our handling of challenges, as evidenced by our successful navigation of the recent financial crisis.

The human aspect of our success also encompasses our alumni, who contribute vitally to the college’s value proposition as exemplars of accomplishment. Across a wide range of endeavors, they demonstrate the power of a Dickinson education through personal achievement *and* by modeling the college’s core values of citizenship and engagement. For example, a recent survey querying alumni about public and community service revealed:

- In the past two years, nearly 90% of alumni respondents engaged in community volunteer work;
- In 2008, 85% voted—a rate at least 50% higher than the national average; and
- Last year, 95% made a financial contribution to a non-profit organization.

Indeed, the college as a whole models the qualities of engagement, imagination and enterprise that we value so highly in our students.

Key Challenges. Our internal assets provide a firm foundation for optimism. Nonetheless, a scan of our internal environment also reveals very substantial challenges for the college. Some reflect the imperative to push further in areas where we have momentum. Admissions and fund raising are salient examples. In other cases, such as residential life and facilities, the task is to create momentum—to move forward in ways that bring our program and accomplishments up to the level of success we have had overall.

SP III identifies the following challenges as key for Dickinson. In order for momentum to be sustained and accomplishments realized we must improve in regard to each, in some, frankly, breaking past cycles of underperformance.

- Intense competition in the arena of **enrollment**, especially within our new peer group (p. 7),
- A pressing need to enhance the **residential life** experience at the college (p. 11),
- The absolute requirement to address shortcomings in our **facilities** in key areas (p. 20),

- An imperative to build stronger connections and mutual support with our **alumni** (p. 25), and
- To achieve any and all of our aspirations, the need to extend the past decade's progress in providing the college a more adequate financial base through greater **wealth** (p. 32).

SP III is devoted to a frank assessment of these challenges and to proposals for meeting them. As earlier plans, SP III outlines broad goals and objectives, with detailed implementation schemes (some as documents for internal use only) drafted in parallel or following. Some projects, such as individual facility improvements, can be achieved in a relatively short, defined time frame. Others, such as cultural change in student life or alumni philanthropy, are long-term ventures. Yet even here, we can make an important start. In sum, we are confident that, taken as a whole, SP III represents an agenda for Dickinson that can be achieved in the next five years. We make this assertion, of course, aware that external circumstances, especially in the economic realm, may change in unpredictable ways over this time period. Therefore, the proposals outlined in the plan have been designed so that they may be either accelerated or slowed in accomplishment in response to unforeseen circumstances.

Building Our Community of Students: Enrollment Management

Dickinson seeks students whose abilities, attitudes and attributes match the college's vision. Our students must be academically able, intellectually curious and ready to join with others in making the most of the opportunities Dickinson offers for learning and engagement. Collectively, they must be diverse in background, perspectives, interests and skills. Moreover, the college requires a student body that simultaneously includes those whose families have the resources to support the cost of a Dickinson education *and* those for whom financial aid is required to ensure access. In regard to size of the student body, current enrollment—2,200 to 2,300—is optimal from the standpoint of Dickinson's program, facilities and infrastructure, and finances.

SP III recognizes that there are currently formidable challenges to achieving these goals. In terms of geography, the proportion of high-school-age students in Dickinson's traditional primary pool (the Northeast) is declining, while the proportion in newer areas to us (especially the South and West) is rapidly increasing. Moreover, the population of students of color—historically inadequately represented in the college's recruitment pool—is rising. Diversity is critical to our stature as a national liberal arts college, both because it enhances the learning environment and because highly talented students desire it as a minimum requirement in their college search. Most fundamentally, it is essential to our mission of educating students for a 21st-century democracy.

In regard to finances, the current economic instability has diminished both the real and perceived ability of families to afford a private college education. Requests for no-need aid are expected to increase as families look for a subsidy to offset the cost of attendance. Meeting such requests will contribute to Dickinson's competitiveness but also further press our aid budget.

Lastly, in the past decade Dickinson has entered a new college peer group, where we are committed to remain permanently. This group's prestige is matched by its considerable resources, which many if not all

seem willing to deploy in what has been aptly characterized as an “arms race” to recruit desired prospective students and maintain admit rates lower than ours. Dickinson must work creatively to stay competitive in this highly selective tier.

In order to meet these challenges, Dickinson requires a strategic approach to enrollment that meets student needs, responds to changing demography, makes effective use of financial aid and achieves both selectivity and diversity in the admitted student pool.

Strategic Goal A: We must sustain and strengthen selectivity by increasing the quality of applicants *and* by improving the college’s yield rate. Dickinson needs to strengthen its position as a *first-choice college*. This will require continuous attention to the fit between our academic offerings and the interests/goals of prospective students, the vibrancy of our student life program and the quality of the college’s facilities. It also means special attention to the following elements of enrollment management.

Objective 1. Despite the high percentage of our students who enroll early decision (42-46 percent over the last five years), admitted student surveys indicate that Dickinson is not the first choice for many of our current students. We expected that yield rate would decrease given the more selective colleges with which we now compete, but our rate should be higher than the 24-27 percent achieved the last five years. We need to identify who are we not reaching or enrolling and why.

Objective 2. *Academic quality*: Dickinson’s strategy over the last five years has been to invest in no-need and need-based financial aid to influence enrollment of the top 10-15 percent of the admitted pool, top-performing students with considerable choice among the most selective colleges. Without ignoring this segment, we need to identify other parts of the pool where we can have greater success. Investment must be made in the upper end of the mid-50 percent of the pool to increase the overall quality of the class. Average SAT scores have ranged from 1275 to 1298 over the last five years; that quality should be sustained and improved with this strategy. The percentage graduating in the top 10% of their high school classes has ranged from 37 to 53 percent over the last five years—a target of over 50 percent should be achieved.

Objective 3. A high retention rate is a quality indicator of the most selective liberal arts colleges. As more students select Dickinson as their first choice, we expect to see an increase in first-to-second year retention. For every point we improve retention, we gain approximately seven students per class or approximately 25 students over four classes (counting some further attrition). Our goal for first- to second-year retention should be 93 percent.

Strategic Goal B: We must continue to grow interest in admission to and attendance at Dickinson. A key element in this effort will be reshaping our geographic and demographic reach according to national and international shifts in prospective student pools.

Objective 1. *National Geography*: Since 2003, the ratio of admitted students from outside the Northeast has grown from 12 to 22 percent. Dickinson’s rising stature positions us to increase our yield from these states. As the proportion of high-school-age students grows especially in the South and the West, we must enlarge the proportion of students coming from outside our traditional primary pool. Strategic Plan

It established a target of 30 percent for areas outside the Northeast (VA-ME); that remains our goal. Continued growth should be achieved in emerging areas with a growing Dickinson footprint (Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Denver, Houston, Atlanta, Miami, Charlotte, Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill, Chicago and Minneapolis). We also must optimize enrollment in relatively nearby urban areas such as Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and Boston, and also in western New York, western Massachusetts and western Maryland (where we have not had an intentional presence in the last decade).

Objective 2. *Diversity*: The ratio of students of color in the national school-age cohort is rising rapidly, and Dickinson has made notable strides in raising their representation. Our goal for the next five years is 12 percent or better, sustaining and improving on our recent progress. To do so, we must increase our wealth and/or reach into those highly sought-after sectors of students of color with both high academic ability and means to pay all or a significant portion of tuition. In addition, there are segments of the Jewish student population whom we have not reached. Dickinson provides key requirements for many Jewish students: a robust Judaic Studies curriculum, a nationally-recognized Hillel and ties with Israeli universities and the South American Jewish community. With a kosher dining option now added, we should be able to reach new segments of the Jewish population.

Objective 3. *International Reach*: The proportion of international students at Dickinson has grown from under 3 percent to over 6 percent since 2003, a change fitting our position of global education leadership. Dickinson's international applicant pool reached a record high in 2010, and we expect that it will continue to grow given the turnaround in the global economy. We also expect that the percentage of students able to pay the full or nearly full cost of attendance can and will increase. This will be needed to offset our aid commitment to those need-eligible. Regions of interest include Europe, Asia and South America. Our goal is to reach 8 percent international in the next five years.

Objective 4. As the traditional four-year secondary school model of transition to college changes, Dickinson must reach students taking *non-traditional* paths. This includes both the front end (accelerated high-school degree) and back end (gap year[s] before entry) of transition from secondary school. As we develop our community college partnerships, Public Service Fellowships and participation in the Yellow Ribbon Program, we must respond to new enrollment patterns and points of entry by identifying how we integrate students arriving via new avenues into our four-year model.

Objective 5. Dickinson's connections with the U.S. military, including strong ROTC and cooperation with the Army War College, may create an enrollment niche for us. Strategies should be developed to reach students drawn to a college that combines interest in the military with the liberal arts tradition. These include *veterans and children of families with a service tradition*. The development of the security studies certificate is an example of a program differentiator with projected recruiting appeal.

Strategic Goal C: Our recruitment strategy must optimize the relationships among students' actual and perceived financial needs, the college's financial resources and macro-economic trends.

Objective 1. Financial aid continues to be important in providing access to our student body: 59 percent of the Class of 2013 received institutional aid with an average institutional grant of \$22,853. Although the college made strides in reducing no-need awards over the last five years, this form of aid is expected to

increase going forward. Tuition discounting reached record-high levels at private colleges and universities in 2008; the average discount rate for first-year students increased from 39 percent in fall 2007 to 42 percent in fall 2008 and an estimated 42.4 percent for fall 2009. Dickinson's increase in the first-year tuition discount rate (38.6 percent for FY10 to 41.6 percent for FY11) remains below the national average but is much higher than in the past (a first-year class low of 28 percent for FY07). We must achieve a discount rate that is both competitive in recruiting and realistic in regard to our resources, especially as we anticipate greater socioeconomic diversity within our current and prospective student population.

Objective 2. The college is committed to providing access for students who have the potential to succeed at Dickinson and who will enhance the value of the shared Dickinson experience. We must recognize, however, that our ability to support students in need is linked directly to our ability to recruit students from families that are near-pay or full-pay. We need to continue to develop strategies that protect and ideally expand our pool of students/families with the capacity and willingness to bear the costs of a Dickinson education, even in uncertain economic times.

Objective 3. Currently, net tuition and student room and board revenues fund more than 80 percent of the operating budget. As a result, major increases in aid must be covered by decreases in operating expenses or equivalent increases in other revenues. Funding the quality of our academic and residential experience while providing access to families with greater demonstrated need probably represents the biggest financial challenge the college will face in the coming decade. A critically important avenue for us to follow in meeting this challenge—one already well traveled by virtually all of our peer and aspirant schools—is fundraising for financial aid, particularly through endowment. SP III sets a goal of bringing the amount of aid at Dickinson funded by the endowment to \$5 million by 2015.

Strategic Goal D: In all of our recruitment efforts, we constantly need to use competitive recruitment tools.

Objective 1. Continue to use data to develop and expand the annual applicant pool ensuring that the depth and breadth of characteristics required to build and shape a class are present. Dickinson's senior inquiry pool has grown to over 30,000 inquiries. Measuring affinity and developing strategies to determine which inquiries are most likely to become applicants are critical to expanding the applicant pool. Strong technology resources are required to improve and remain competitive.

Objective 2. In regard to geography, alumni and parent volunteers have been and will continue to be keys to success in expanding Dickinson's admissions footprint. Appeal can also be broadened by ensuring that students from outside our primary region recognize the portability of the Dickinson degree to return to their home region for careers or graduate and professional school.

Objective 3. In regard to diversity and urban recruitment, opportunities include expanded relationships with community-based organizations (CBOs). These identify students in under-served high schools with the skills and desire for success in a highly selective college setting. Our work with CBOs can broaden diversity in terms of both students of color and socioeconomic background. For international students, a strong relationship and recruiting model comprised of targeted American and international schools abroad, as well as alumni volunteers and the availability of financial aid to highly talented students, will

enable the college to continue to grow recruitment. Lastly, we must continue to develop relationships with independent schools across the board.

Objective 4. From the admissions process to classroom interaction and social networking, today's students expect and demand a high level of up-to-the-minute *technology and new media*. It will be critical, for example, that we optimize and leverage internet and interactive capabilities in recruitment. And that we offer an educational program that includes a vibrant and visible technology dimension.

The Dickinson Student Experience

SP III affirms Dickinson's mission to prepare young people by means of a useful education in the liberal arts and sciences for engaged lives of citizenship and leadership. In order to achieve this end we must address the student educational experience comprehensively. As early as 1962 a campus committee on the state of study at Dickinson concluded:

A liberal education cannot be provided without regard for the physical, social and moral climate of the community. Our purpose can be furthered or hindered, according to the kind of community we build. All aspects of the community must be considered: from student housing and study facilities; to extra-curricular and cultural opportunities; to faculty salaries and teaching loads. Above all, thought must be given to the ... values of the community and the human interaction and interrelationship within the community....

This statement fundamentally articulates what might be called a campus ecology view of the student experience in which all dimensions of activity are seen as deeply interwoven. All dimensions of student activity—in the classroom and beyond—should be informed by characteristics central to Dickinson's vision. These shared characteristics of both our academic and student life program include:

- Independence—students at Dickinson enjoy freedom to craft individually-suited educational programs reflecting their own interests from among a wide variety of choices. They are encouraged to find their own voices as learners and citizens and to develop a sense of purpose.
- Engagement and active learning—students are encouraged to become active agents in their own education inside and outside the classroom, as part of the campus community and in interaction with the multiplicity of communities beyond. Students are actively engaged in solving the challenges of a residential campus and feel a part of decision making and planning.
- Diversity—students exhibit competence and willingness to move beyond the familiar to challenge their view of themselves, others and the world around them. They deepen their learning by engaging in a diverse environment that expands their current scripts. At the same time, security and inclusion are important to us. Learning flourishes when human dignity is paramount and artificial distinctions among students do not exist.
- Interdependence and responsibility—students recognize that with freedom comes responsibility to others individually and in community. Interdependence has multiple expressions on our

campus ranging from shared governance and active yet civil dialogue to collaborative learning; it also includes a sense of responsibility for the success of the college. One key expression of interdependence is a mentoring culture in which students have ready access to many and diverse exemplars—fellow students, faculty, alumni and staff—from whom to learn.

While respecting the need for balance in our programs, SP III confirms the college’s strategy of placing special emphasis on areas in which Dickinson can offer distinctive, exceptional opportunities. Such an approach enriches our students’ experience *and* advances the institution, as exemplified by our national leadership positions in global education and sustainability.

At the same time, SP III recognizes one major area in which we have not articulated a compelling vision and charted a path to excellence. For decades, the college has struggled to develop a consistent program for student life beyond the classroom. Reports and studies from 1962 on reveal continuing concern and frustrations about campus life, namely: tension between social and intellectual dimensions in many students’ lives; ambivalence about the role of the Greek system; underdeveloped potential of the residential and social experience to bolster a more mature learning environment; the inadequacy of facilities in support of student life; and a weakly developed sense of campus community.

Strategic Plans I and II addressed these concerns but largely failed to find ways in which our newly articulated vision for the college could help resolve them. SP III focuses on this task. The time is right to advance a more substantive vision of how the experience beyond the classroom challenges and supports students who are seeking a stimulating college experience. Over the past decade the college has done a remarkable job of competing for outstanding students and recruiting an increasingly diverse, talented student body drawn from an ever-widening geographical pool. Continued success rests heavily upon the long sought improvement in student life on our campus.

Strategic Goal A: Dickinson’s curriculum reflects our commitment to independence by offering students freedom to choose from many options in fulfilling all-college requirements, selecting a major and picking electives. This breadth of offerings—unusual for a college of our size—and flexibility work to our advantage both in allowing students to tailor academic experiences to their individual needs and in recruitment. Similarly, we offer an unusually wide range of opportunities for student involvement in student life, both in the residence halls and through a multiplicity of organizations and activities. Both the emphasis on independence and breadth of opportunity that underlie the student experience should be maintained.

Objective 1. While recognizing that we are operating in a period of limited resources, Dickinson should maintain and even enhance its *rich curricular repertoire*, continuing our practice of developing new programs that address emerging contemporary issues and reflect special areas of faculty and student expertise and interest. One potential vehicle for achieving curricular innovation and “movement” at a time of resource limitation is broader application of certificates, currently exemplified by health studies, security studies and dance.

Objective 2. Freedom of choice in the academic program helps students develop independence, enhances capacity for lifelong learning and inculcates a sense of accountability for decisions. It also makes the college responsible to provide appropriate support, especially through *effective advising*. We need to continue to enhance our advising system 1) by improving evaluation of faculty performance of this role, 2) by linking advising more closely to planning for graduate study and career—this means integrating the Advising Office, Career Center, and academic departments into a seamless network and (3) by considering ways for students to make meaning out of the entirety of their Dickinson experience. In regard to this last goal, we should charge a working group with developing a proposal for a system that facilitates all students’ intentional thought about their personal, academic, career and civic goals. For example, a digital or electronic portfolio might assist with planning and provide a final, creative product that could be shared with prospective employers and/or graduate schools (students might particularly document experiential learning activities in academic and student life).

Objective 3. The senior year is a particularly important time for student reflection on what they have learned and what awaits. Moreover, many Dickinson seniors return from study abroad and feel a sense of disconnect with the campus. We need to make the senior year more meaningful as a time of reflection, for example, by revising the current senior week programming in favor of a comprehensive, year-long senior class program and establishing a senior club—a place complemented by interesting programs and discussions with faculty and staff where seniors can gather.

Strategic Goal B: Dickinson’s vision of a useful education focuses on the development of a “21st century skill set.” The college endorses all of the skills identified by the American Association of Colleges & Universities’ VALUE project: inquiry and analysis, critical thinking, creativity, written and oral communication, reading, quantitative literacy, information literacy, teamwork, problem solving, and integrative and applied learning. Underlying these individual skills is the foundational ability to “learn how to learn,” to apply the multifaceted capacities engendered by a liberal-arts education innovatively in a rapidly changing, complex world. While thus envisioning the skill set we desire for our students broadly, SP III cites the following for special attention either as elements of distinction for Dickinson and/or requiring particular enhancement:

Objective 1. Reflecting and anticipating the growing complexity and interdependence of the world in which we live, Dickinson emphasizes the ability of our students to synthesize knowledge, methodologies, and perspectives—to “connect the dots.” We want students to see connections between courses, curriculum and co-curriculum, academic and residential experiences, and the campus and wider world. This *commitment to connectivity* works across the curriculum including in the traditional disciplines. It is especially reflected in the strength of our interdisciplinary offerings, including majors (many with dedicated staff and facilities). We should continue to enhance interdisciplinary endeavors, taking full advantage of the flexibility of our curriculum and openness of our faculty. Steps include enhanced advising for students in connecting elements of their programs, ongoing support (e.g., workload flexibility, development funds and rewards) to faculty for interdisciplinary endeavor and curricular innovation especially through certificate programs.

Objective 2. Dickinson is a recognized leader in developing *global perspective*. We must continue to build our program in this arena with particular attention to: introducing active learning (field study, research, independent study projects, internships) into study abroad, providing better re-entry experiences for those returning from off-campus study, exploring ways to apply technology to enhance our concept of a “global campus” and expanding our presence outside of Europe. This must proceed in conjunction with strong efforts in regard to *domestic diversity* (our new majors in Africana and Latin American, Latino & Caribbean Studies offer examples). We need also to review funding of and enrollment in abroad programs to ensure financial viability of our global education network.

Objective 3. The study of *sustainability* has become a distinctive element of our program, and we have already established a leadership position in this arena. We need to push this initiative by identifying Dickinson’s unique approach to sustainability, defining more fully the place of sustainability in the curriculum and taking full advantage of sustainability’s potential for enhancing active learning by tying curriculum to operations, service and the wider world. One definite focus for us must be melding our international and sustainability initiatives to create a *global sustainability* dimension unique among American colleges and universities. Most immediately, we must fully endow the Center for Sustainability Education.

Objective 4. Dickinson places a premium on active learning; across the curriculum, students are already asked to search out, question, re-conceive and create knowledge. We must enhance our efforts in this arena. Key elements include: student research and creative performance, independently and with faculty; internships; field study; and service learning. We need to advance the concept of the campus as a “living laboratory” for sustainability and continue integration of research and internships into study abroad. These goals will require us to exceed current limits of support, with high priority assigned to endowing student-faculty research, internships, pedagogical innovation and the Community Studies Center. Our active learning initiative should also place a premium on work connected to community engagement. For example, the already substantial coordination between Academic Affairs and Student Development in regard to service learning, internships and volunteerism can be more visible, more actively celebrated and better communicated to the campus and public.

Objective 5. *Technological and information fluency* is an area in which we must do more. Students come to us accustomed to using technology but lacking mastery and a full grasp of its potential *and* limits. Liberal-arts skills and values are precisely those that enable people to understand and steer the rapidly developing world of information over-abundance. We currently have a comprehensive writing initiative with defined learning goals for the curriculum, faculty training, a new student “writing associates” program, a multilingual writing center and good assessment tools. We need a comparable initiative on technology and new media. Efforts should include coordination and re-imagination of existing information literacy programs, articulation of clear goals for information technology and expansion of digital media and geospatial fluency programming. This must include enhancement of our digital resources *and* an emphasis on the library as the central focus of campus intellectual life. A top priority is the creation of an *Academic Commons* to draw together currently dispersed LIS resources and support outreach. Beyond facilities and equipment, the Commons must have staff who can track emerging academic technologies and translate their knowledge into applications for our program.

Strategic Goal C. Diversity. Strategic Plans I and II identified diversity as a critically important goal. While continuing strong efforts in recruitment, hiring, and academic program, we need also to focus on deepening the dimension of diversity in the student life experience.

Demographic data and student surveys confirm that diversity may—beyond its obvious significance to any 21st century educational program—in some aspects distinguish Dickinson from regional peers. In the 2010 senior survey, for example, our graduates reported an enhanced ability to relate to people of different races beyond that of our comparison institutions. Still, many graduating seniors report “no change” or “weaker” skills related to diversity. It remains relatively easy for students to avoid sustained interaction with people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse ideas and perspectives, particularly outside the classroom. Housing options, dining hall culture and strong student identification with clubs, teams, and fraternities and sororities often prompt students to find and maintain an identity with a homogenous campus sub-community.

Objective 1. We need to extend and deepen student life programming around diversity, reducing our reliance on one-time programs as a framework for diversity education beyond the classroom in favor of more sustained efforts. For example, we must develop a residentially based peer education program with clearly articulated outcomes as part of a substantive first-year residential program. More broadly, resident advisors, orientation advisors, club and organization officers and athletic team captains are all cohorts of student leaders who represent the college and have significant social influence over peers. We should provide these students with training to develop leadership and understanding around issues of diversity and privilege to in turn positively influence and educate other students.

Objective 2. Building a supportive and inclusive community characterized by respect, equality and accountability is a priority. This goal requires both strategies to promote a pluralistic, integrative and accepting campus culture and to address what counteracts such a culture. In building such a community, we will extend full participation in campus life to individuals and organizations which embrace our community standards and values. So, for example, we should expand services and support for LGBTQ students, and enhance campus education to foster a more inclusive and safe environment for individuals. Or, in another area of diversity, we need to address facilities shortcomings in spaces that support students’ spiritual and religious faith expression from a variety of traditions. At the same time, we should refuse participation to organizations that do not embrace our Community Standards (Code of Conduct). And we must formulate and disseminate a bias incident response protocol to our campus as a tangible representation of our commitment to address intolerance.

Objective 3. It is vitally important that students experience meaningful opportunities to learn from sustained interaction with people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse experiences and perspectives. In particular, we should evaluate the current special interest/theme housing options to make sure that our desires to support group interests are not at the expense of a residential experience in which students are, without exception, interacting with and learning from the rich diversity of the student body.

Strategic Goal D: Students themselves are a valuable resource for enhancing the Dickinson educational experience. We need to take full advantage of our students’ abilities to contribute to

their peers' learning process. This deepens their own education *and* expands the college's human resources.

Objective 1. We need to expand student activity as mentors. Initiatives should include continued experimentation with upper-class teaching assistants and writing associates in first-year seminars, heightened activity by academic majors' committees and advisory groups, expanded networks of peer advisors in offices such as Advising and the Career Center, enhanced involvement of students returning from off-campus as mentors on study abroad and peer advising among international students. In student life, there are strong possibilities for involving students more actively in mentoring. We must continue to develop leadership abilities among students in clubs and other activities and more systematically involve upper-class students as mentors in residential life.

Objective 2. We must make more work-study experiences meaningful on the models of Clarke Forum staffers, Trout Gallery interns, student farmers and ALLARM workers.

Strategic Goal E: Enhance the Residential Experience. The residential experience exerts a powerful influence on students' growth and development. The opportunities and expectations associated with the residential experience can significantly contribute to or detract from students spending their time in educationally purposeful activity. Dickinson must articulate and implement an improved, comprehensive vision for residential experience—one that includes the ways buildings are designed, the ways in which students are housed and the ways in which program facilitates learning and dialogue.

Objective 1. Create a comprehensive framework for residential life that supports personal and academic success and fosters leadership and civic development by providing opportunities for students to create, manage and sustain a community for learning. We must fully implement a first-year residential “*neighborhood*” program to create a laboratory of engagement in community and civic life. Specific components include: residentially-based leadership councils to provide students with opportunities for self-governance, such as developing guidelines for productive community living and solving concerns; a residentially-based system of peer-review and accountability for behaviors disruptive to community; safety councils (modeled on neighborhood “block-watches”) to work with Public Safety in oversight of residences; partnerships with Carlisle agencies for reciprocal benefit and mutual learning; program councils with tools and resources to meet social, cultural, academic and recreational needs of each neighborhood through event planning; and advisory boards that add staff and faculty guidance.

Objective 2. SP I endorsed a “ladder of responsibility” as a residential program philosophy. In this model, students move to progressively more independent housing options as they rise in class year. An unanticipated outcome of this sequential model appears to be significant stratification of class years on campus. Cross-class friendships do not easily develop. The independent living so coveted by seniors has perhaps helped their individual development, but it has reduced their campus influence as engaged citizens who lend maturity and perspective to younger students and provide stewardship of the campus as a whole. Also, the “ladder” philosophy provided a framework for housing but not for education and community development within the residence halls. We need to complement the “ladder of responsibility” with a “*network of responsibility*.” While our students will continue to be housed in residences

appropriate to their stage of learning, the “network of responsibility” adds an expectation for them to improve the experiences of others around them, and to enhance the college generally.

To move forward in establishing such a network we need to: a) implement the first-year neighborhood program, b) establish a programming partnership between first-year neighborhoods and residence halls typically occupied by sophomores in order to extend the neighborhood concept, c) develop a residentially based series of programs for sophomores with a focus on leadership and career/internship planning that is facilitated by seniors through a senior house model, and c) permit interested sophomores the opportunity to “block book” into areas based on academic or theme interests that enrich their residential community and engage first years in partner building. Overall, we must explore longer term integration of first years and sophomores in common foundational housing arrangements.

In regard to upper-class students, we need to balance legitimate needs for independence that juniors and seniors feel with a responsibility for them to impart their guidance and experience to others for the improvement of campus culture. Key objectives include (a) taking advantage of juniors who remain in Carlisle by selecting and training them to provide leadership in two elements of the first-year experience: the orientation common reading (selection and facilitation) and the community service engagement initiative and (b) creating a senior “house” program by refurbishing the college’s “grand” houses to provide desirable space (singles and good social space) for seniors. Residency would carry cross-class responsibility (with training) to guide and mentor small cohorts of sophomore students, who are often overlooked in college programming.

Overall, the network of responsibility includes a strong emphasis on students as mentors—sophomores, juniors and seniors all reaching to those coming behind them. Yet there are other sources of important mentoring in residential life. We have at Dickinson a significant and under-tapped resource for our students: more than 60 employees who are also alumni of the college. We should develop a program linking these alumni to residence hall floors to provide new students with an administrative resource/adult presence for questions and concerns about navigating Dickinson and for exposing students to role models for whom Dickinson is a defining aspect of their personal and professional lives.

Objective 3. A strong residential program depends on a foundation of quality and equitable housing. Despite projects including renovations in the Quads and Morgan Hall and the construction of the “Tree House,” we have not paid adequate attention to residence halls. Many of our facilities have significant deferred maintenance needs and are overcrowded, leading to difficulties in student culture and experience. For example, the need for beds has eroded common rooms and lounges in the residence halls—elements essential for community life to form. Residence halls are of widely varying quality with resulting painful inequity in housing options, and they lack sufficient spaces for study. In order to resolve these fundamental shortcomings we must:

- a) Initiate plans and fund construction of new beds required to create swing space for long-term deferred maintenance, relieve crowding, reclaim social space and reduce reliance on off-campus and leased properties.

- b) Target improvements to the Quad area to improve the architecture and modernize space, enhance the presence of the Dickinson Walk as per the Campus Master Plan and address landscaping and aesthetic deficiencies.
- c) Re-claim and renovate some of the college's "grand" houses for the new senior housing program.
- d) Finalize a residence hall renewal plan (long term) as part of the current Quality of Student Life Facilities Study to address deferred maintenance and modernization.

Strategic Goal F: We must take what might be called a "campus ecology" approach to create an overall campus culture of mutual support and respect. Our goal is to improve the learning and living environment at Dickinson by encouraging safe, healthy and positive norms for behavior by individuals and organizations. SP III envisions the following steps in the next five years:

Objective 1. Our current dining facilities do not meet our goals for campus culture. We must redesign the dining hall to promote a more mature, inclusive and respectful form of campus life. Redesign will facilitate program initiatives, such as potential enhancement of faculty and family presence.

Objective 2. The impact of Greek organizations on campus culture has been a persistent point of dispute at Dickinson and elsewhere. We should commission an objective external study to help us determine what role fraternities and sororities should have in our 21st-century liberal-arts college. Our intent is to move beyond anecdotal information in addressing key questions. Does the presence of Greek organizations detract from or enhance recruitment and retention? How do fraternities and sororities affect the academic climate at the college? What contributions do they make to our student development effort? Are there other forms of residential and social life that better prepare our students for the world before them? For decades the college has been ambivalent about Greek organizations. We should use the opportunity of a study to decide whether Greek Life is or is not part of our 21st-century ambition and, if so, how?

Objective 3. We need to address behaviors that are clearly destructive to our goals for our community. Steps include: 1) completing initiatives to reduce sexual assault such as implementing a peer educator program and introducing a required module on sexual assault as part of the pre-college education expected of all students, 2) implementing an education/intervention program (drawing on our new hazing policy), particularly for student populations known to be at greatest risk and 3) translating findings of a current research study on campus alcohol use into a comprehensive plan for improving the campus climate around alcohol—this plan to address social norms, risk management and education, assessment and interventions related to student conduct, and environmental support/management.

Objective 4. With the arrival of a new Director of the Counseling Center, we must draft a strategic plan that will expand the focus of the counseling center beyond therapy and crisis intervention, to include outreach, education, greater emphasis on developmental concerns, an orientation toward positive psychology and helping students bolster their resilience in the face of stress and other difficulties.

Objective 5. Many issues of campus life lend themselves to collaborative research endeavors between faculty and staff. We should enhance these opportunities, which create positive benefit to faculty in

advancing their scholarship and to staff who reap the advantage of insights gleaned for policy and program improvement.

Strategic Goal G: An integral part of Dickinson’s mission is to prepare our students for leadership. We need a cohesive leadership development program that enhances students’ talents, helps them take responsibility for their environment, and maximizes opportunities for them to be engaged in complex problem solving for campus benefit, thereby enhancing their self-perception as stewards of the college:

Dickinson has a long-standing tradition of involving students in the leadership work of the college. Students sit on all-college governance committees and have held major responsibilities for managing residence halls, coordinating orientation, and guiding other initiatives. We need to expand such opportunities and also address obstacles on campus to effective leadership development. For example, recent cohorts of graduating seniors report that among the skills least well developed while at Dickinson were those associated with functioning effectively as a member of a team. Our students value activity but anecdotal impressions from staff members who work with student leaders suggest that for many being busy in multiple activities trumps the deep and difficult work that is often associated with doing something well. In sum, we need to significantly enhance the opportunities and expectations for students to learn and demonstrate leadership for the campus good.

Objective 1: Develop new opportunities for student engagement and leadership. These include roles within the first year “neighborhood” residential program; participation in advisory boards sponsored by each department within the Division of Student Development—these boards will parallel the majors in academic departments; leadership in comprehensive review and evaluation processes for fraternity and sorority chapters; management of thematic/special interest housing options; and engagement in a new peer conduct review board and in a new men’s program for early intervention in conduct issues as part of our student disciplinary process.

Objective 2. We must expand leadership education for all club and organization officers, establishing a student advisory board for consultation and program development support. Non-traditional forms of educational outreach, such as social media and electronic/digital resources accessible by any student, can be used to reach a wider audience. As part of this effort, we should develop a plan to continue the very successful LeaderShape Institute and also develop a program whereby retired members of our local Carlisle community with significant leadership experiences connect with emerging student leaders to provide guidance, networking and opportunities for students to acquire valuable lessons.

Strategic Goal H: We must enhance students’ sense of community and connection to Dickinson.

A sense of belonging and community can powerfully anchor a students’ experience, improve retention, and create a lifelong connection to Dickinson. Anecdotal and survey information reveals that this is an area where we must improve. We have heard from students through focus groups and on institutional research surveys that Dickinson lacks a fully vibrant sense of “community” on campus, particularly when compared to peer and aspirant institutions. Building a meaningful sense of community and social engagement that reinforces academics is complex work, and we may not have adequately invested time and resources in this direction. Many of the proposals offered in SP III, such as enhancing the dining hall

or more effective senior year programming, will help us address this issue. Nonetheless, we need to create a special ad hoc group to investigate and recommend ways to enhance our students' affiliation with Dickinson as a source of support, meaning and affection.

Facilities

The success of our academic and student development programs has always rested heavily upon the quality of our facilities. Over the last decade, significant forces have raised the bar for facilities even higher. Academically, pedagogical innovation has created a demand for classrooms and laboratories that support more flexible and interactive teaching. In student life, a more diverse and active student body requires more multifaceted spaces for activities and residential halls designed more intentionally to meet learning goals. In regard to athletics, more and better facilities are needed to support expanded intercollegiate and intramural sports, a wider range of recreational pursuits *and* heightened concern for fitness and wellness. Across the board, facilities are now measured by their responsiveness to demands of sustainability including the Presidents' Climate Commitment and their ability to adapt to new technologies.

Simultaneously, an unsettled economy has created additional, conflicting demands in the facilities arena. On one hand, there is heightened need for cost saving and efficiency. On the other, there is a growing, powerful "consumerist" expectation among the public of more amenities in all areas. Many incoming students arrive from secondary schools that have invested significantly in student space. So, too, have Dickinson's peers, placing us at a distinct competitive disadvantage. Without doubt, the look and feel of the campus plays a key role in the decision process of prospective students and their families. In sum, our facilities provide first impressions to prospects, meaningful experiences for current students and lasting impressions for alums.

Dickinson has in recent years demonstrated a striking ability to respond to these multiple challenges with facilities projects that are as successful programmatically as they are visually. In the sciences, for example, Tome Hall supports the most advanced interactive pedagogies, to which Stuart and James Halls add a strong commitment to interdisciplinary endeavor. In regard to sustainability, three of our projects – the "Treehouse," the new Rector halls and renovated Althouse—have received LEED "gold" classification. Overall, the Campus Master Plan outlines a broad vision for the future development of the college's buildings and landscape. And we have continued to refine that vision through a special Quality of Student Life (QSL) facility study.

An examination of the Master Plan demonstrates, however, that we have major challenges in providing facility support appropriate to a high-performing college in the 21st century. In the planning process we identified important campus projects that have not yet been completed, or even started, to meet pressing needs. These include the construction of a third wing of the Rector Science Complex, initiation of a major effort to enhance facilities in the arts, the completion of the Biddle Field project and a new "varsity" athletic complex, a complete renovation and expansion of the Holland Union Building and both the renovation of most residence halls and construction of a new residence complex to reach student development program goals. Add to this list the imperatives of reducing operating costs and enhancing sustainability through projects that help us meet the President's Climate Commitment.

The Master Plan offers us long-term guidance in meeting these challenges, but we cannot count on undertaking any of the major projects it outlines in the near future. Although we are just ending a major, highly successful capital campaign that included important gains in science facilities, we need time to secure further funding for large projects. Nonetheless, SP III includes a significant focus on facilities for the next five years. We must redress deficiencies that interfere with our academic and residential programs, speaking to concerns such as inequity in student residential options (some flagship residences have not been fully renovated since their construction decades ago). These efforts must simultaneously be designed to transition us to the larger projects envisioned by the Master Plan. Moreover, we need to invest in projects that will make the campus and the programs we offer attractive enough to achieve our goals for student recruitment—increasing “first choice,” yield rate and retention. Facilities improvement is not a frill or an option; rather it is an essential step to ensure the financial strength of the college into future decades. First-class facilities help Dickinson make the case that all private higher education must make in today’s environment: the experience is worth the price.

Strategic Goal A: We propose an investment of up to \$35 million in facilities projects over the next five years. These projects are intended to address pressing campus needs, position the college for transition to larger future endeavors, and—particularly important—immediately remove obstacles to improving our admissions and retention performance.

Our guiding criteria in identifying projects for the next two to five years should include:

- Projects that move us toward the vision of the Campus Master Plan.
- Projects that help meet key challenges in SP III, including competitive advantage in admissions.
- Projects that enhance our signature programs, provide opportunity for immediate impact and are highly visible.
- Projects that serve a maximum number of students or attract student audiences previously unavailable to us.
- Projects with little or no “sunk cost.”
- Projects that advance us toward our goal of zero net greenhouse gas emissions and climate neutrality by 2020.

Objective 1: *Science facilities.* Dickinson has articulated a bold vision for science facilities and—through the construction of Tome, Stuart, and James Halls—moved well along toward fulfilling that vision. Completion of our plans for science facilities through the construction of the “third hall” of the Rector complex and creation of a “science green” integrating all of our science buildings remains our long-term objective. In the near term, we have immediate deficiencies that must be addressed. The biology department remains divided between the new Rector complex and Dana Hall, where conditions are inadequate to support our program. For example, the biologist in Dana who works with reptiles should be relocated to the Rector vivarium; others have found the woeful Dana greenhouse inadequate both for teaching and scholarship, including student-faculty research. Overall, physical division of biology—our largest science department—is seriously undermining collaboration necessary for a successful program. We must plan and implement an interim solution for current deficiencies. That solution should, ideally, provide adequate facilities for the faculty currently in Dana, reunite the biology department, remediate

infrastructural issues in Dana making it available for alternate uses and imaginatively move us forward toward our overall vision for science facilities.

Objective 2: *The Holland Union Building.* The Holland Union Building (HUB) plays a critically important role as the campus center for student activity including dining. The Campus Master Plan imagines a major renovation and expansion of the HUB to address deficiencies that currently inhibit the structure's capacity to support the college's program and cripple recruitment. These deficiencies include significant deferred maintenance and modernization exposures, an entirely inadequate Dining Hall, insufficient social space, over-crowding and much more. Moreover, the Master Plan envisions a redone HUB as an integral component of a broader reconfiguration of campus thoroughfares, particularly through development of an enhanced Dickinson Walk.

Informed by the QSL study, SP III recommends a more modest HUB renovation focused on two key elements. First, the cafeteria requires substantial upgrade. Students describe it as "too high school" and an impediment to a healthy social life on campus. Some changes in furniture layout, dining options and traffic flow have been implemented already, but more must be done to make our dining facilities work for a successful student life experience. Second, the HUB needs reconfiguration to fully realize its potential as the central gathering space for the campus community. For example, the QSL study proposes converting the current Social Hall into a "campus living room," a highly interactive and visible gathering space for student functions and a simple place to meet. Contiguous space could also provide a location for late-night food choices and weekend dining alternatives, priority interests for our students. Similar improvements can be made in the lower level and exterior of the building. In sum, these renovations address the most salient HUB deficiencies and move us toward our overall vision for the building.

Objective 3. *Athletics and Fitness.* Dickinson's athletic facilities do not adequately meet our needs. Over one quarter of our students participate in a varsity or inter-collegiate sports, and a much larger percentage participate in intramurals, casual sports and wellness activities. In regard to employees, Dickinson has a reputation as a "healthy place to live and work" with a wellness program that generates additional demands, such as yoga and pilates classes, on our facilities. The Kline Center is simply no longer able to support this rich range of endeavor. In fact, the demands for space in the Kline are so severe that athletic teams are practicing at all hours of the day and night, seriously limiting opportunities for intramurals or casual sports use by students and our community. Unfortunately, the Kline Center is not the only space deficiency in the sports arena; we have renovation needs at Biddle Field (locker rooms, bleachers, restrooms, press box) as well. Beyond this, there are new areas of student interest which we are currently unable to support, such as squash with growing demand especially from our international student population and students from domestic private secondary schools. In all aspects—intercollegiate sports, intramurals, fitness and casual recreation—the inadequacy of our athletic facilities places us at a competitive disadvantage in admissions in comparison with virtually all of our peer institutions.

The 2008 Master Plan began to identify multiple facilities projects that are required to address our sports and wellness needs and the QSL study is providing a higher level of detail to our plans. While we may not be able to achieve all of our objectives in the near future, we must prioritize and begin to move forward on as many of the following projects as funding allows in the next five years:

Expanded Fitness Center: An addition to the Fitness Center is needed to meet the demands and expectations of our students and to redress an area of serious competitive disadvantage (many of our peer and aspirant institutions have recently modernized and expanded their fitness centers). A new Fitness Center would also serve the needs of our entire community and would advance the goals of our employee wellness programs.

Squash Court Center: Squash is a sport that has always been of interest to our international students and faculty, but which is also growing in popularity in general. It has the potential to attract new students to the college, especially internationally and among prestigious private secondary schools. The Kline Center currently has only two squash courts, both too small to meet the requirements of international squash. In order to satisfy a recreational demand of our community and possibly support an intercollegiate squash team, we require facilities for five squash courts, two of which could also support racquetball.

Varsity Sports Arena: Dickinson is the only college in the Centennial Sports Conference that does not have at least two field house facilities and lacks a separate venue for varsity sports—specifically basketball and volleyball. This glaring deficiency is the main reason for over-crowding in the Kline Center. Consequently, the construction of a varsity sports arena for basketball and volleyball, perhaps as an addition to the Kline Center, is a high priority.

200 Meter Track Field House: Despite a very impressive program, Dickinson College does not have an indoor facility that can adequately support track and field. Here, too, we are at a serious disadvantage versus peer and aspirant schools. The QSL study has determined that the Kline Center cannot meet this need; a new venue is required. This new field house would also include multiple basketball and indoor tennis courts—other badly needed facilities.

Biddle Field Facilities: Biddle Field has come a long way over the past five years, with the installation of two synthetic turf fields, new visitor bleachers, a new scoreboard and more. New locker rooms and a significant home bleacher renovation to include an improved press box area and upgraded restroom facilities remain to be done. The current locker rooms and fitness area at Biddle are very poor, undermining our program and inhibiting recruitment of serious athletes who are seeing vastly superior facilities at our peer and aspirant schools. We need to find solutions to the remaining challenges associated with Biddle Field renovation within the time frame of SP III.

Objective 4. *Residence Halls.* Long-term improvement of the residential footprint of the campus will require full articulation of our vision for residential life and a sustained, strategically planned series of major investments. The magnitude of our challenge is manifest in deferred maintenance alone. Despite more than \$20 million in capital investment over the past decade, we have yet to address deferred renewal issues in a majority of the housing stock. And we suffer both from overcrowding and an inequity in housing options that prompt student and parent angst, translating into major challenges for Student Development and Campus Operations. Beyond that, Student Development goals for the residential experience are rapidly evolving, creating a glaring disconnect between program and space. In sum, we face the interlocking problems of deferred modernization and programmatic obsolescence, both of which—as in other areas—have serious negative effects on recruitment and retention.

We can make progress toward a comprehensive plan by addressing two key issues in the short term. As our large Fall '10 first-year class has demonstrated, at full enrollment we are bursting at the seams. Students are living in spaces originally designated for social activities and in triple rooms not designed for this use. And we have too many students living off-campus to meet our programmatic goals. A new residence hall would allow us to relieve overcrowding and to return students from off-campus for the full residential experience that we promise. Fortunately, there are financial opportunities associated with capital expenditures for new bed space that help to make this a realistic possibility in the short term, since new beds generate new revenue.

Second, we need to address the Quads, our residential area most deficient both in deferred maintenance and programmatic obsolescence. Beyond interior inadequacies of the Quad buildings, the exteriors, landscape and architecture are in serious need of rejuvenation. More broadly, the Campus Master Plan identified west campus, from the library to the Kline Center including the Quads, as a key challenge. This area lacks the look and feel of the rest of the campus as a result of the size, scale and design of both the buildings and the spaces—pathways and landscape—between them. We have over the course of a decade managed to renovate eight Quads buildings one by one, connecting them when possible to add beds and introduce new exterior architecture. We need to move forward on this area, renovating the two remaining Quads, extending the Dickinson Walk, improving landscape and—if funding is available—addressing the shortcomings of Kisner-Woodward Hall (possibly through replacement) and the McKenney Suites.

Beyond our top priorities, the college should consider moving forward as soon as funding is available on two issues identified in the Master Plan and QSL study as imperative. 1) Enhance residential options for seniors through a house model that combines increased availability of single rooms and quality social space with a program of mentoring younger students on academic and social issues. Stuart, Reed, Todd, Matthews and 50 Mooreland are among the facilities that might lend themselves to this purpose. 2) The college currently relies on a large number of small houses leased from local landlords to accommodate upper-class students. These houses are difficult and expensive to maintain. Eliminating our reliance on them should be a priority as we plan bed count for a new residence hall.

Strategic Goal B: Dickinson has achieved a position of national leadership in sustainability education, in no small part as a result of the efforts of our facilities staff to “green” the campus. We must continue to apply the goal of greater sustainability as a key criterion in operations and in facility renovation and construction for reasons of greater efficiency, meeting our responsibilities under the Presidents’ Climate Commitment and enhancing our learning environment.

Objective 1. One integral element of our sustainability initiative is to turn the campus into a “living laboratory” by adding an educational dimension to green operations and projects. As indicated in the report of our 2010 Sustainability Symposium: “In creating a productive learning environment and working campus infrastructure, campus operations must be a platform for curricular and co-curricular learning experiences, not a separate physical entity.”

Objective 2. We must in the next five years undertake projects and continue to operate in ways that advance us toward the goals set in Dickinson’s climate action plan. For example, we should continue to set “silver” LEED status as a minimum criterion for all construction on campus and maintain our

commitment to using sustainable sources of energy. Similarly, we should seek to follow the Master Plan's guidance on reducing the intrusion and use of automobiles on campus.

Strategic Goal C: In tandem with targeted projects to redress deficiencies and seize opportunities in facilities, we must sustain a robust program on deferred maintenance, particularly as financial constraints make cuts in the maintenance budget tempting. We have had success in some areas, such as sustaining the attractiveness of the campus. By contrast, failure to keep pace with modernization of our residence halls has placed us in a very unenviable situation in terms of program and competitiveness.

Alumni—"Descending the Old Stone Steps..."

Our students' educational experiences on campus must be seamlessly connected with where they go and what they do after graduation. While we recognize the intrinsic value of their four years at the college, our mission is to prepare young people for citizenship, civic engagement and careers thereafter. Key dimensions of our educational program, such as our emphasis on lifelong learning, are designed with this in mind. Graduates' achievements and activities not only fulfill the college's mission but also powerfully validate our distinctive approach to the liberal arts and the worth of a Dickinson degree.

Moreover, Dickinson's alumni are an underutilized resource for both our current undergraduates and the college as a whole. Alumni have the ability to serve as mentors for our students and to assist them through active networking to find internships and job placement. Alumni achievements of all sorts—personal, in career and in community—can enhance the college's reputation and serve as vehicles for increasing Dickinson's visibility. Our alumni, in this regard, are embodiments of the Dickinson narrative. Finally, alumni are *the* primary source of philanthropy for institutions like Dickinson.

SP III identifies stronger relationships with alumni and more effective tapping of alumni resources as critical to our future. We need to network with ever wider circles of alumni, seeking their assistance in career placement, recruitment and other volunteer work for Dickinson. We need to better communicate the accomplishments of our graduates. Moreover, we need to enhance alumni philanthropy for the college, creating a more vibrant "culture of giving." It is in this arena—giving, especially as reflected in endowment—that Dickinson lags most painfully behind many of our peer and all of our aspirant institutions.

Strategic Goal A: Successful transition of students from their undergraduate work to advanced study and career placement is a key element in the relationship between Dickinson and its alumni. We need to ensure that we offer comprehensive and effective support for students' post-graduate plans and aspirations—both for advanced study and for career. Our academic and student life programs center on the development of a 21st-century skill set that serves our graduates well in this regard, but we must also provide targeted support programs.

Objective 1. We need to integrate the work of the Advising Office, Career Center and faculty into a seamless network able to inform and guide students on how to plan for the future and build educational programs that support their aspirations and placement. We should determine whether our current division

of responsibilities is the best approach and discuss how these offices integrate their activities. Whatever specific organization we adopt, a *unified and coordinated effort* should be our goal.

Objective 2. As our student body becomes more diverse and as we emphasize diversity as a distinguishing characteristic of the college, we need to assess how well we serve students of color and international students with graduate school and career advising.

Objective 3. Most alumni (55-60 percent) enroll in graduate school within five years of graduation. Given the importance of advanced study, we need to enhance our already substantial efforts to provide experiences and support that guarantee acceptance and success in high-quality graduate programs. Key steps include:

- a) The college needs to deepen its current emphasis on active and applied learning with demonstrable outcomes such as research projects, performance and studio opportunities, internships and experiential learning including volunteerism and service learning. Such activities are valuable as important credentials for admission to graduate work and as preparation for graduate study. Many of these opportunities will be rooted in academic departments/programs, but they must be a *key characteristic of student life* as well.
- b) Advising and the Career Center must work with departments to ensure the availability of information to students. We should ask: What programs do departments currently conduct? Should there be a designated “placement officer” in departments? What possibilities are there for peer advising? Do department Web pages address graduate study? Coordinated workshops and information sessions with *faculty* must be scheduled. We have considerable information about graduate placement for students, but much of it remains anecdotal and unsystematic. We need to do a better job of tracking graduate study.
- c) Dickinson has an active program for securing fellowships that support graduate study such as Fulbright, Goldwater, Truman and Udall Scholarships. We have improved our advising system in this area and moved toward critically important practices such as identifying candidates early. The result has been considerable success, especially with Fulbrights, but we can do much better.
- d) As one special dimension of its work to prepare students for further study, the college has developed a network of special articulation agreements with excellent graduate schools, both nationally and internationally, in a range of fields. The college’s connections through articulation agreements with graduate and professional schools help students identify possibilities, can facilitate entrance to competitive programs and can allow for a program that closely integrates undergraduate and graduate study, sometimes saving the student a year or more of formal study. We need to continue to grow this network of agreements.

Objective 4. Career placement for our graduates is about one-fourth in business, one-fourth in education and much of the remainder in government, other non-profit and health sectors. Education, non-profit and government are rising destinations in line with national trends. Growth fields nationally include the government (especially security), sustainability (“green jobs”) and health care (nursing and allied-health professions). Our current trend, again in line with national statistics, is for more students to postpone job

search until well after graduation. For Dickinson graduates, service and personal development frequently figure as the primary considerations in career rather than salary. These trends all speak to a strong alignment between our academic programs and graduate choice/emerging opportunities. Nonetheless, developing strong support to graduates in career placement—initially and thereafter—is of utmost importance to the college. We suggest the following steps to enhance our current efforts:

- a) As with graduate placement, we need the best available information on alumni career activity. An initial review of available data suggests an approximately 40 percent correlation rate between undergraduate majors and career paths during alums' early careers. It appears that over time the correlation gets weaker as alumni gain experience and practice their liberal-arts skills in new settings. We need a more complete data collection strategy (to include surveys, individual contacts and social networking reports) and further analyses of these patterns to help us be more specific about successful outcomes, thus arming us to help students identify their best possible options.
- b) Alumni have a particularly important role to play in career placement. We must expand programs such as *Dickinson Works* that take best advantage of their capability to mentor and place graduates in internships and careers thereafter. Given shifts in the national economy and our recruitment geography, the college should *cultivate connections to employers* in regions projected for economic growth. International students who return to their home countries are an obvious potential resource for graduates with a global career focus.

Strategic Goal B: Dickinson's future will in significant part be determined by the quality of our connections to our alumni—they are a key asset to our value as a college. Yet, despite recent strides, we continue to lag behind peers. In order to meet this concern we need to launch an initiative to intensify our alumni relations program. Key elements of such an initiative include:

Objective 1. *Expand Channels of Engagement.* Develop and implement initiatives that connect, engage and inform as many alumni as possible about the college and how association with it adds value. We need to expand programming in areas including affiliations beyond class year by age and life stages; educational opportunities; alumni travel; use of Web and technology to bring on-campus educational programs to homes and businesses; and for the undergraduate population. We must maintain a strong presence in Tier I clubs (regions where 1,000 or more alumni reside; 67 percent of alumni live within this tier), while moderating staff commitment to regions with fewer alumni. The intent of realigning programs is to strengthen bonds, increase involvement in the college and add value to the Dickinson network.

Objective 2. *Facilitate Connections in and among alumni and with the college.* Expand and manage the model of “giving back” beyond financial support to a global alumni network of volunteers. Enhance and expand on campus alumni activities and use technology to expand access to the Career Center and the academic community.

Objective 3. *Celebrate and Honor Our Constituents.* Showcase the personal and professional successes of alumni and honor and recognize outstanding service to the college and beyond, thus making alumni

activities and achievements more visible. Such efforts should, for example, include exploration of opportunities for academic departments to profile accomplishments of alumni on their web pages.

Objective 4. *Better, technologically-informed communication with the college and among alumni.* We must inform and educate alumni and parents about the college through multiple channels (print, Web, social media and events). We envision and will implement new steps reflecting the rapid evolution of technology-driven social networking to foster the alumni online community and to make alumni events more visible on the college Web site.

Objective 5. *Data collection and assessment.* Working with advancement colleagues and advancement services, we will establish a task force to collectively determine key metrics to measure our progress. Survey annually alumni entering into their 10th, 25th and 50th reunions for their reflections upon the Dickinson experience and the value it has brought to their lives and conduct regular surveys of community and civic engagement.

Objective 6. Connection between the college and its alumni is not something easily created once they have graduated. A sense of affinity with Dickinson needs to be cultivated during the undergraduate experience, and even before. We must develop a clear plan to cultivate Dickinson identity and affiliation from admission to orientation to graduation. This project crosses all divisions of the college and should be undertaken by a task force representing all constituencies including of course alumni.

Strategic Goal C: In all our outreach activities, we must not overlook the potential role of Dickinson parents as an integral part of the Dickinson community. We need to offer good programming for them while their daughters and sons attend the college, and we need to include them in our networking and volunteer activities.

Human and Financial Resources

Dickinson has completed a strikingly productive decade in regard to resources, recruiting talented and dedicated faculty and staff, organizing and operating in effective ways and growing the college's financial base. For example, we will shortly successfully complete a \$150 million capital campaign, Dickinson's first full-scale effort of this type, despite the challenges posed by the current economic downturn. Nonetheless, both our programmatic aspirations and new peer competitive group make continued success in expanding Dickinson's resource base an imperative. In regard to endowment particularly, the college's limited history of fund raising leaves Dickinson in a vulnerable financial position, absolutely and comparatively. As a result, we must both create an environment that supports faculty and staff creativity/productivity *and* expand our financial resources. Put differently, over the last ten years Dickinson has out-performed its precariously modest wealth, chiefly through the efforts of the people who make up our community. We need to maintain that high level of human contribution while we simultaneously obtain significant additional resources. This latter goal will have to be achieved chiefly through garnering philanthropic support comparable to the generosity that has fueled other peer and aspirant colleges.

Strategic Goal A: Faculty “Sustainability.” Dickinson is blessed with a talented, dedicated faculty of teacher-scholars. Beyond meeting high standards for teaching and scholarship, they are distinguished by their flexibility and creativity. The former is reflected, for example, in their active participation in interdisciplinary programming; the latter is evident in their striking record of curricular and pedagogical innovation and research. The chief challenge for the future in regard to the faculty is *sustainability*—defined in this context as the challenge of providing the multifaceted supports that will sustain their exceptional level of performance and commitment to the college.

Objective 1. Salary and benefits must remain competitive. Dickinson needs to continue to strive to reach the 90th percentile of AAUP salary data; at a minimum salary increases should match those of peer institutions. Faculty salary and benefit standards should be measured against these peers, separately from the determination of our administrative and staff salaries and benefits.

Objective 2. The college should continue to support active scholarly and professional development. At a minimum, the current level of support—especially for travel to conferences, research and professional networking, which at Dickinson and other institutions has been identified by faculty as a top priority—must be maintained.

Objective 3. Dickinson remains committed to small classes and direct faculty interaction with students as mentors and advisors. This requires sustaining the current 10:1 student-faculty ratio and the current five-course annual teaching load for faculty.

Objective 4. Ideally, the college needs to carry forward plans to add faculty positions, as outlined in the capital campaign. Added positions are required to support department chairs, who currently receive no reassigned time for their service, and to sustain key curricular initiatives such as sustainability and security studies. Conversely, should reductions in the size of the faculty be required by financial circumstances, the college should look to reduce both use of adjunct faculty and the hiring of sabbatical replacements in preference to reducing the number of core, tenure-line positions.

Objective 5. Faculty recruitment should reflect our goals for the academic program and for the overall student learning experience. The college places high priority on diversity as a consideration for faculty hiring and on recruitment of faculty who can contribute to all-college initiatives such as sustainability studies. Dickinson also strongly desires faculty who are open to interdisciplinary work.

Objective 6. Perhaps most critically, the college needs to be attentive to pressures on *faculty time*. This has been a high priority in prior strategic plans, as reflected in our reduced course load (from six to five annually) and in the shortened sabbatical cycle (from seven years to six). No similarly dramatic improvements are likely in the near future. Nonetheless, SP III does call for expanded faculty activity, for example in the area of advising. The college *must* simultaneously find ways to ease pressure on the faculty. For example, we should seek efficiencies in committee service that provide more time without reducing faculty role in college decision-making. We also need to support faculty in developing innovative teaching techniques that are less, rather than more, time intensive. Our efforts should include careful study of faculty workload, looking to ensure equity. Finally, we need to sustain, and if possible expand, support for the faculty “life cycle.” For example, we need to expand the endowment for the

Mellon and Sloan Foundation funded “provost’s discretionary” program to provide faculty with release time to attend to health and family responsibilities.

Strategic Goal B: Provide a challenging, rewarding work environment for administrators and support staff . Such an environment will foster the initiative, creativity, and dedication necessary to sustain Dickinson’s success through the current economic climate and for years to come.

Objective 1. Continue to offer a competitive compensation and benefits package that compares favorably to applicable local, regional and national markets.

Objective 2. Design an organizational framework that will result in even greater institutional efficiencies while maintaining a high-degree of quality service to all constituents. For example, create and maintain positive working relationships throughout the college to promote strong interpersonal connections and sharing of institutional knowledge by way of cross-divisional working groups.

Objective 3. Be identified as a leading institution in the area of workplace wellness by offering best practice initiatives focused on preventative measures and disease management services that encourage healthy behaviors among members of the Dickinson community.

Objective 4. Engage employees in the development and implementation of workplace solutions through various forums that encourage open dialogue and discussion of key challenges. Promote lifelong learning by providing a variety of leadership, professional and personal development initiatives to employees and local communities.

Strategic Goal C: Ensure wise financial management necessary to support our very ambitious vision for the Dickinson educational experience *and* to compete with the leading national liberal-arts colleges on a permanent basis.

Objective 1. *Credit Rating:* In the current environment of limited credit, it is essential that Dickinson be able to access capital on the basis of its own financial strength and to borrow based on its own credit rating. At present, the minimum level of financial strength the college should maintain equates to an S&P rating of “A” or better.

Objective 2. The college’s *endowment* is far smaller than those of its aspirant institutions. This permanent funding gap must be diminished both through giving and wise management. We should invest the endowment of the college to optimize returns for current and future generations of students within certain parameters. These include an acceptable level of risk; the expectation that investment strategies will result in above-average returns compared to a defined group of peer institutions’ returns; the goal of achieving top quartile investment returns in the majority of years; and an appreciation for the institution’s values related to the “Triple Bottom Line” (i.e., concern for economic benefit, organizational and social policies, and environmental impact). In order to attain financial sustainability over time, we target a 10-15 year average annual total return net of fees equal to the Spending Rate plus inflation (CPI plus 1percent).

Objective 3. *Reserves.* Dickinson’s reserves—unrestricted net assets minus plant, property and equipment net of debt—provide financial flexibility to meet the challenges of volatile economic

circumstances and to take advantage of opportunity. These resources should be no less than nine months of net operating expenses (currently \$78 million).

Objective 4. *Positive Operating Performance.* The college's operating budget must be balanced or better, obviating any need to use reserves to cover deficits. Since reserves are created primarily by setting aside prior year surpluses, they are not self-regenerating. Investing them to reposition the institution or to support new initiatives which will, over a reasonable time, provide a net revenue stream is appropriate. Spending them to cover deficits decreases both liquidity and flexibility, weakens the college's financial position and limits our ability to take advantage of opportunities going forward.

Strategic Goal D: One key dimension of our “outperformance” of wealthier peers is operational efficiency. We need to secure, permanently, the college’s creativity and emerging leadership in this arena. SP III identifies these promising areas for exploration and innovation:

Objective 1. *Partnering:* All colleges and universities partner to some extent with others to reduce costs, achieve efficiencies and enhance service. Dickinson has explored and implemented innovations in this area for over a decade and should continue to lead in institutional collaboration. Possible areas of collaboration include, but are not limited to, group health coverage; cross-institutional alumni networking and co-sponsorship of events; joint professional development and training; information risk management and disaster recovery; wellness programming; grant solicitation and bidding; sustainability initiatives; compliance and risk management; internal audit and legal services; and routine administrative functions, such as accounts payable, payroll and accounts receivable. Much of our partnering will be with other liberal-arts colleges, as exemplified by the Shared Services Consortium. We also need to continue and expand relationships with community partners such as the Borough of Carlisle, YMCA, Carlisle Regional Medical Center, local school districts and Downtown Carlisle Association.

Objective 2. *Leveraging Information Technology:* The college has invested substantially in information technology, most visibly in the Banner implementation project. This investment has yielded benefits in service to the campus community, provided a reliable campus network and foundation for exploiting emerging and open source technologies, and created computing tools unavailable to most peer/aspirant colleges that enable senior managers to make decisions informed by up-to-date, usable information. Additionally, leading edge analytical tools have proven valuable in responding to the global economic crisis. The college needs to press its advantage relative to peer institutions by fully exploiting its investment in information technology to manage costs, enhance efficiency, and facilitate decision making. Potential steps include exploiting new and emerging technologies such as free, open source software that can take the place of costly commercial products; exploring eProcurement; and expanding access to technologies that allow for flexibility in how and where employees do their jobs.

Objective 3. *Outsourcing:* Retaining an external entity to perform a service that might otherwise be performed in-house is a proven higher education strategy that can reduce costs and enhance service. Dickinson has—often for good reason—made relatively limited use of outsourcing. Given current economic conditions, we should take a close look at outsourcing possibilities, knowing that this policy needs to be applied in a manner sensitive to the culture of the college and supportive of its mission.

Objective 4. *Operational sustainability.* Dickinson has as a strategic goal “instilling a culture of ecological sustainability, prudent use of resources and respect for the natural world” into our program; this goal must characterize our operations as well. In particular, we need to be mindful of our action plan for climate neutrality under the Presidents’ Climate Commitment and also to the ways in which sustainability in operations can bring long-term efficiencies and cost savings by reducing waste.

Securing the Future: The Challenge of Wealth

While thus acknowledging the importance of human contribution and wise financial management, SP III asserts one additional truth. Reaching our goals—to enhance the value of the Dickinson experience for our students *and* to maintain our position in a new peer group of leading colleges—will rest upon our ability to build the college’s wealth. This can only be accomplished through a substantial increase in giving from alumni, friends, foundations, corporations and the government. The recession and economic uncertainty make this an unsettled time for national liberal arts colleges and work against our goal of attracting wealth. So, too, does Dickinson’s long history of modest success in regard to philanthropy. Our giving levels—both in terms of participation and size of gift—have consistently lagged behind those of our current elite peer group. This is particularly troubling because size of endowment and deeply rooted cultures of philanthropy have long driven institutions’ prestige.

Nonetheless, we have reasons for optimism. In defiance of the current economic downturn, we are completing our capital campaign on schedule. Moreover, it differs from prior Dickinson fund-raising efforts not only in its magnitude but also in its clear priorities, effective organization and—critically—attention to building pipelines for future giving. Despite economic turmoil, we have radically increased the college’s endowment and we are steadily attracting more donors. In the arena of foundation support, we have continued a tradition of success, garnering grants from such prestigious foundations as Luce, Mellon and Sherman Fairchild and from government agencies including NSF and NASA. Also, the very economic challenges of the current period offer an opportunity for an entrepreneurial liberal-arts college on the move to reposition in the marketplace and in regard to giving. Dickinson is uniquely set in momentum, profile and leadership to seize of this opportunity. We must devote resources to keep the momentum going.

Strategic Goal A: Our goals for philanthropy cannot be met without a dynamic alumni relations program. As described elsewhere in SP III, we will move forward in building a 21st-century alumni relations program that meets alumni needs with elements tailored to demographic interests (young alumni, 22-35 vs. 44-65, etc.), affinity connections (academic and professional) and traditional affiliations (class years). While recognizing the multifaceted purposes of such an alumni relations program, we must be sure that it is appropriately integrated into fund-raising activities.

Objective 1. We need to heighten our engagement with young alumni, inculcating a strong, ongoing sense of responsibility for the college and for future generations of Dickinsonians. This must include an appreciation of the ways in which the college’s ongoing success has personal value for each alum. Key to

this effort is strengthening the bridge between the undergraduate experience and the first five years after graduation.

Objective 2. We can build upon high-level engagement strategies such as Dickinson 2025, the President's Summit, or the Sustainability Symposium to connect with promising prospects for our philanthropic efforts.

Objective 3. We need to develop a dynamic and effective volunteer management structure that incorporates Dickinson Works, Dickinson Admissions volunteers, class agents and regional cabinets. Overall, we must create more short-term and meaningful volunteer opportunities.

Objective 4. In regard to all objectives, but especially those that aim at broadening our donor and volunteer base, we need to actively, innovatively apply networking and data gathering technology.

Strategic Goal B: The college must continue on its quest for private support beyond the expectations any of us had just seven years ago when the current campaign was launched. As we turn the corner on \$150 million, the board of trustees has encouraged the college to move forward with another significant fundraising initiative. Goals of this initiative will reflect priorities identified in SP III.

Strategic Goal C: Beyond the specific task of addressing a new capital campaign, we need to expand the overall foundation of philanthropic support for Dickinson. In essence, we need to translate our current decade of momentum into the type of permanent, pervasive culture of giving that characterizes the best endowed and most prestigious colleges. Our endowment goal for 2015 is \$400 million, based on \$35 million of new gifts and investment growth.

Objective 1. We need to continue to expand the college's donor base, for example, by targeting growth in the annual fund from \$4 million to \$6 million by 2016.

Objective 2. While widening the donor base, we must also focus on large gifts that have major and even transformational impact on individual programs and the college as a whole. Targets for SP III include: doubling major gift commitments between \$25,000 and \$250,000; increasing gifts to the John Dickinson Society by one third with concentration on the President's Circle (\$10,000+) through heightened marketing, a larger prospect pool, and enhanced giving options; strengthening relationships with prospects capable of gifts in excess of \$500,000 and deepening the qualified pool by 50 percent; and closing five gifts in the \$500,000 range from prospects that are new to this level of giving.

Objective 3. We must solidify the planned giving program so that it provides no less than a third of cash receipts each year.

Objective 4. We need to continue our striking record of securing philanthropic support from national private foundations that brings both new resources and institutional visibility. Such grants are particularly useful in launching innovations and in providing third-party validation to the excellence of our academic program.

How Do We Measure Our Success?

SP II identified accountability as a defining characteristic of Dickinson, stating straightforwardly that “We will be accountable for the goals we set.” SP III reaffirms that commitment. The college as a whole has established multiple markers against which we will measure our accomplishments. In regard to budget, for example, we have long-term models that set goals in categories ranging from enrollment to endowment performance. Our Campus Master Plan has established a vision against which we will evaluate progress in facilities. Similarly, the Presidents’ Climate Commitment sets a long-term goal for dimensions of sustainable operations. SP II also mandated that accountability efforts extend to the divisional and programmatic level and we have made substantial progress to that end. Library and Information Services, for example, has established a regular regimen of annual planning with explicitly stated outcomes. Moreover, we have engaged in a number of special projects aimed at assessment, such as multi-institutional, grant-funded studies of the educational impacts of study-abroad practices. We need to enhance and expand measures of both the effectiveness of current programs *and* our progress toward institutional goals, especially those articulated in SP III.

Strategic Goal A. Improve effectiveness in measurement and evaluation of accomplishments and outcomes.

Objective 1. While we must continue to move forward in assessment across all dimensions of the college, three areas are of particular importance and promise for us:

- a). *Academic program.* We currently have in place a robust ten-year cycle of programmatic review, a newly created assessment subcommittee of the Academic Program & Standards Committee working in tandem with a designated associate provost, and an initiative under way to guarantee that all programs and courses have a strong assessment dimension. We need to complete the initiative, ensuring comprehensive assessment. This must include measures—quantitative and qualitative—to track and evaluate the academic program’s distinctive characteristics, such as active learning, interdisciplinarity and emphases on global perspective and sustainability.
- b). *Student development.* The Division of Student Development is currently implementing an assessment plan that calls for the creation of an Assessment Leadership Team and division assessment committee, definition of desired learning outcomes and evaluation measures/methods, a program of periodic internal and external reviews, and evaluation of major initiatives. This plan should be fully implemented, with particular attention to assessment of the impact of key initiatives in SP III such as the neighborhood program.
- c). *Alumni.* Assessment of the impact of the Dickinson experience upon alumni is an essential element of accountability for us, and also complements our efforts to enhance ties with alumni. We need to redouble current efforts in this arena. Tracking of alumni achievements, activities, and careers can and should be enhanced. The recent work by the Office of College Advancement in surveying and meeting with some 2,500 alumni potential donors—an effort that included gathering information on such key elements of our program as community engagement and

citizenship—shows how this can be done. Such efforts to learn alumni perspective should be systematized, for example, through longitudinal assessment of groups during their 5th, 10th, 25th and 50th reunion years.

Objective 2. Dickinson has recently expanded staffing and programming in Institutional Research and, through our Banner campus computing system particularly, enhanced technological support for data gathering. For example, we currently engage in an active program of data gathering in the arena of student experience and learning using CIRP, HEDS, NSSE and other survey instruments. Our efforts in regard to information need to be redoubled through expansion of our capacity for data gathering and continuing integration among Institutional Research and other administrative and academic units.

Strategic Goal B. SP III envisions a comprehensive, multifaceted assessment effort applied across the college and extended Dickinson community. There are, however, a number of key performance indicators that are central to meeting the challenges that define this plan and for which we have explicit targets for 2015. We believe that these “kpi” targets are as achievable as they are important. They represent both goals for SP III and assumptions upon which the plan rests.

Enrollment Management

- Enrollment: 2,200-2,300 [2010: 2,359 FTE]
- Applications: 5,750-6,000 [Class of 2014: 5,033]
- Admit rate: 40-42% [Class of 2014: 48%]
- Early decision: 48-50% of incoming class [Class of 2014: 44%]
- Yield rate: 30-35% [Class of 2014: 27%]
- Quality: 1300-1330 SAT; over 50% in the top 10% of high school class [Class of 2014: 1278 SAT average, 37% in top 10%]
- Retention (1st to 2nd year): 93% [2009-2010: 90%]
- Geography: 30% for areas outside the Northeast (VA-ME); 8% international or better [Class of 2014: 22% outside Northeast, 6% international]
- Students of color: 12% or better [past five years 10.7-15.5%]
- Financial aid: first-year discount rate: 3-5% below the peer/national average; % of class on need-based aid 50-52%; aid funded from endowment \$5 million [2009-2010 – 52% on need-based aid; \$3 million aid funded from endowment]

Finance

- Sustain or improve the college’s Standard & Poor’s “A” rating
- Balanced annual operating budget or better
Endowment return: Spending rate (5% of 12-quarter average) + inflation (CPI) + plus 1% [past 15-year average: 8.3%]
- Endowment total: \$400 million [\$312 million as of 6/30/10]

- Reserves: no less than nine months of net operating expenses (currently \$78 million) [\$122 million as of 6/30/10]

Advancement

- Annual fund: \$6 million giving level [2010=\$4 million]
- Increase membership to the John Dickinson Society (\$2,500 and above gifts to the annual fund) by 30% (n=850) [2010=648]
- Alumni participation rate in giving: 38% [2010 rate = 34%]
- Recent alumni (1-5 years out) participation rate in giving: 35% [2010 rate= 29%]
- Parent participation rate in giving: 40% [current parents= 35%]
- Senior class gift drive participation: 90% [Class of 2010= 70%]
- Old West Society: Increase membership to 500 members [FY10 = 340]
- Major gifts: Double commitments between \$25,000 and \$250,000; increase the qualified pool of prospects capable of gifts over \$500,000 by 50%; close five gifts in the \$500,000 range from prospects new to this level of giving.

Facilities

- \$35 million investment in major facilities projects
- Facilities conditions index (deferred maintenance to facility replacement value) of 10% or lower

Sustainability

- Reduce carbon emissions by 2% or more annually
- All major construction/renovation to LEED “silver” standard or better

We are confident that these targets, taken individually and together, are achievable within the time frame of SP III. We recognize, though, that most are subject to forces outside our control. Such forces may accelerate or slow our progress. SP III, therefore, also assumes that the college will respond to changing circumstances with the same success it has demonstrated in implementing its first two strategic plans.

Addendum

Optimistic Realism: Planning for the Unexpected

Dickinson's 2002 Middle States visiting evaluation team noted the "remarkable vitality that pervades this place" and our "ambitious vision for the future." The team concluded that "Dickinson needs only to follow its optimistic realism and begin to write the next exciting new chapter in its long and venerable history." SP III has been drafted in this spirit of "optimistic realism." Nonetheless, we are aware of factors that threaten to change the prospects for liberal-arts colleges, including Dickinson, drastically for the worse. These factors include changing demography, economic instability and potential downturn, rising operating costs in such areas as utilities and healthcare and—especially—possible unwillingness of families from our traditional recruiting pools to pay the cost of a private college education.

As optimists, we do not believe these factors will come together in what might be called a "perfect storm" scenario. But realism demands that we consider how the college might reposition to meet radical negative change. We need to ready ourselves for such a possibility in an enterprising fashion that goes beyond the obvious, destructive path of simply hacking away at our current budget. SP III calls for the creation of an ad hoc "21st-Century Challenge Committee" consisting of administrators, faculty and staff with trustee, alumni, parent and student consultation as appropriate to examine potential responses to major negative change. We do so in preparation for very hard times but also open to the possibility that application of one or more of these options may well prove beneficial—in providing sustaining financial resources and/or in enriching our program—regardless of circumstances. Options to be explored—posed here as questions—should include:

- A two-year upper-level model: Dickinson already has developed articulation agreements with five community colleges to facilitate transfer of a modest number of exceptional students. There are now signs that some families in our traditional recruitment pool are considering cutting costs by sending their students first to community colleges and then on to baccalaureate institutions. Might developing a 2 + 2 approach beyond our current modest program in order to capture this potential audience be worth exploration?
- Masters degrees: Dickinson already is creating a network of articulation agreements with graduate schools that will accelerate our students' possibilities for achieving masters degrees. If as some argue "masters is the new baccalaureate," should Dickinson consider offering masters degrees in selected departments? Might a model for the college in changing times become 2 + 4 or 2 + 3? (Community college, then Dickinson for completion of baccalaureate and masters.)
- On-line education: Dickinson will remain a residential college, but the rise of online technology may offer ways to reposition in the face of radical change in higher education. Beyond employing online technology to enhance our current program, should we consider more extensive online approaches? This might mean significantly altering our present pedagogies to have students doing more self-directed work in some dimensions of their curriculum and/or offering selected online options to students outside our current residential constituency.

- Outsourcing: Dickinson has largely relied upon its own resources for program and operations, a policy that has brought us significant dividends financial and otherwise. Might we, however, imagine changing policy in this regard, moving forward to outsource aggressively? One version of this approach might be to press well beyond our current practices and explorations in regard to sharing with peer institutions.

Adopted aggressively, any of these options would markedly change the college in ways different from the vision articulated in SP III. Yet each of them offers a potential alternative to radical budget cutting in the face of a true “game change” for the worse for liberal-arts colleges. And each may offer some useful applications even in good times.

While the tectonic plates of higher education may not be shifting, as optimistic realists we need to be alert to the possibility of rupture—that the model we and others have been using for decades is simply broken and must be substantially reinvented. Dickinson College certainly could not solve such a massive issue on its own. In this case, we remain attentive to the national and global discussions about higher education in relationship to economic and cultural trends. We will carry on continuous conversations with those inside and outside higher education about possible “industry-wide” actions that might be entertained in the face of radical change.